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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two joint sessions held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to hear testimony on issues related to the academic performance of Native American students. Educators, employers, parents, and tribal officials testified on the following topics: Native students' high dropout rates and lack of basic skills; low teacher expectations of Native students; high Native unemployment rates; lack of teacher accountability in both public and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools; the failure of the educational system to address differences in learning styles; high Native failure rates on the New Mexico high school competency test, resulting in ineligibility for a diploma or state job; test bias; alternative student evaluation strategies; the overrepresentation of Native students in special education; labeling and self-fulfilling prophesies; positive expectations and recognizing success; parent participation; the question of college preparation versus vocational education; recruitment of Native students to college; and the importance of integrating Native culture into the curriculum. A principal described his own research and findings on hemispheric specialization and cognitive style among Indian and other minority students. Promising educational strategies are described, involving integrated curriculum, cooperative learning, application of special education methods, training of teacher aides, and extracurricular activities as a motivator. (SV)

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
NIEA 22nd Annual Conference - San Diego, California
October 15, 1990

"Academic Performance"

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issue Sessions
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Summary: "Academic Performance"

The first session on Academic Performance was co-hosted by INAR Task Force co-chair Terrel Bell, and NACIE Council member Margaret Nelson. The second session on this issue was co-hosted by INAR Task Force member Byron Fullerton and NACIE Council member Margaret Nelson.

I. Indian Students Aren't Getting the Basics

Local School District Perspectives

- I did a little survey in my school in Montana and found that out of 180 school days, our students attend regular classes for 140 days because we are pulling them out for Title V, Bilingual, and other such programs. Our ACT and SAT test scores in Montana are two or three points lower in Indian country than in any other public schools. So we have to work something out to pull things back together because kids are missing the basics. I have heard encouraging things about how well Indian education is doing, yet I listen to speakers here and read an opening speech from an Indian education leader 20 years ago, and they are saying the same things.

- On the reservation at Gila Bend, AZ, the student body is mixed with both non-Indian and Indian students. About 50 percent of the eighth grade class did not graduate and that 50 percent happened to be mostly Native American kids. So we are very concerned about this problem.

Postsecondary Perspectives

- I teach in a tribal college, so I get the results of the public schools, although the problems could be in the boarding schools or any schools. Basics are very necessary and it seems the public schools really cop out when they teach American Indians. They do not understand Indian people or their culture. They would rather turn their heads and ignore the situation than take a risk or rise to the challenge of really educating Indian students.

  I am a native Californian and I attended a public school in the hills of Fresno County. I tell my friends I was very fortunate because we had three teachers who didn't care who you were. They taught you well all the way through. Today that same school system is not doing this for my grandnieces and grandnephews. This is true nationally across Indian country where public schools have to educate Indian children.

  It is so important that we have the basics. I teach college freshmen and sophomores and many times our students are not ready for college because of their public school background and in some cases because of their boarding school background.

- We handicap our students when we do not insist that they learn the basics. Students who come to the university are not ignorant. They are not stupid. They simply have not been given the training that is necessary and we must find ways to introduce them to materials so that they will be anxious to learn. We must not handicap our students by making it too easy.

- I'm from Oklahoma and am a former classroom teacher and educator. I am also a scholarship officer; I wish we had enough money to take care of all of the applications we receive for higher education, but of course we do not. We have a dropout rate of between 35 and 40 percent, and basic education is really nonexistent for many of our students.

Employers' Perspectives

- In private industry we are seeing children, both Indian and white, who are lacking basic skills. I am a parent, not an educator--so you may throw rocks at me--but I feel that we may have spent too much time on some of the fancy things and frills of education and forgotten the basics. I have people working for me who can't read and can't count. If it were not for computers that tell them how much change to give back, we'd be lost. So I think we need to look at this, because it is a serious loss.

- I am from Phoenix School District Number One, I am a parent, and I am also in private industry. I do not work with the schools or with educators. But I do work with a lot of Indian dropout students because we hire a lot of laborers, and the story is really sad. I work with a lot of Indians who can't read and can't add, so when I give them a list of things to do, they can't handle it. I don't want to sound negative, but I worry that we pamper our Indian students and don't put enough pressure on them to achieve, and it is really sad. I have spoken with them and I hear them say, "Well, you know, our teachers tell us that Indians are always late and we don't run on time schedules." I have to say, "Look, I'm not a teacher, I am a businessman. You get here when I tell you to get here. Don't tell me you're an Indian. That is a cop out." I hear them say, "Well, our teachers used to tell us we don't compete, so we're not a competitive nation." I say, "Well, if you are going to survive in this world, you've got to learn how to compete."

The Ultimate Cost of Failure

- I worry about the 60, 70, 80 percent unemployment rates on our reservations in Montana. Thirty percent of our state prison inmate population is Native American. Over 50 percent of our Indians in Montana are now urban; the unemployment is driving them off the reservations. In the urban areas they run into housing discrimination and stereotyping that will just blow your socks off. Five percent of the Montana population is Indian. So I am wondering, as an educator, what can I do?

Of 500-600 state workers in Montana, I can count five who are Native American. We are not getting into these jobs. As an educator, how do I get my kids ready to go out there and take over Montana? If we'd organize, we'd be a strong political power, but we have to start someplace. We need to educate our kids, get them out and train them to come back and fight that unemployment and the drug and alcohol problems.

II. **Structural Issues and Failure of the School System**

Defining the Problems

- I taught school for 25 years in the public system and never had the opportunity to teach Indian children. I moved back to the reservation near Pendleton, Oregon ten years ago. We have no culture teachers in our school system, other than the Caucasians. Last year I talked to the superintendent of schools about some of our concerns for Indian children in the public system. He said, "Marguerite, do you really think that the Indian people want to have their children educated?" Well, I immediately jumped out of my seat and hit the desk. I said, "What do you mean? We want exactly the same thing that the non-Indians want for their children!" So I think this Task Force needs to get the information out to everyone. It needs to be publicized. It can't just stay on a shelf and get dusty, because we need to get this information to our public school systems where the majority of Indian children are going to school. We have to change the mind set of our public school and BIA school teachers. They must understand that our children are just as capable and academically inclined as any other children.

- I am a school board member of the Tuba, in a public school system, and I am currently being recalled. I haven't finished my two-year term yet. I am also a BIA special education teacher.

  My main concern is that many of our teachers in public and BIA schools are not accountable. We have teachers' unions in our schools and they should at least be trying to make the teachers accountable for teaching our children. We have teachers in both school settings who have been there too long--15 to 20 years. They are receiving comfortable salaries and have no interest in being asked to undertake innovative teaching techniques like team teaching and cooperative learning, or in educating themselves about the learning styles of Indian students. I graduated from the same school district 17 years ago, and some of my former teachers are still there. When I ran for school board, the union was strongly against me. You would think that my former teachers and counselors would support me, but this was not the case. After next Tuesday, October 23, I expect to no longer be a board member, but that's fine. I will go ahead and reinvolve myself through the PTA to try to get our teachers to be more accountable. I feel that we have allowed our teachers' unions to become very powerful and defend their members no matter what. We need to find ways to make our teachers more sensitive and more inclined to try different teaching styles that will better serve our Indian students.

- The flaw in education that results in its failure to find those gifts that each child has is related to its traditional focus on curriculum or the teachers. It is not a child-centered educational process, but if it were, we could probably find these gifts at very early ages. But we are still using the European model of education that came over to this country and was originally designed primarily for the rich and affluent.

- I am from the Ute Indian Tribe in Fort Duchesne, Utah, and I am a higher education and ABE counselor. In my district, I have found that my tribal members have been very low achievers because they have been downgraded. Right now a lot of my tribal members cannot even get through college. So we have had to develop an on-site program that is basic education for continuing on to college. But I would say that the educators from my district have failed my tribe. Many of our high achievers have not been recognized and they turn around and just drop out and become drunks and alcoholics.

- Having spent 13 years in the public school system and also being a product of the BIA system, I can say that for the most part, the American system of education has failed the majority of Indian students. American education has been fragmented and reduced into blocks of time called "Carnegie Units," and in the process of doing this, we are losing a lot of our students. When I was in the BIA school system, I was labeled as an "at-risk" student. All the years I have been in school I was either labeled this or that and I have never been given the opportunity to say that I have a different learning style or to have a school take into consideration the whole element of my environment and my culture as something relevant to my education.

- On the Tohono O'Odham Nation, we have schools that are still under the Bureau and teachers that are just transfers from other BIA schools. This is not too good because many of these teachers have been in the system too long and are only interested in their paycheck, rather than the education of these students.

  Another thing that is really hurting us is lack of funding. Also, if we are going to succeed, we need to start focusing on early childhood education.

- I am the vice principal of Browning School, a public school in Montana that has the largest Indian enrollment in the state. In terms of academic performance, one of the problems we see is the transition of students transferring from one place to another. Many of our students leave our school and attend off-reservation boarding schools for a certain length of time. It seems like the Bureau accepts students for whatever reason, or the courts send them there. They do not have any consistent requirement for accepting students. After they have their "count date," it seems like they look for some reason to send them back. What happens to those students is that when they return to the public school they are anywhere from 6 to 14 weeks behind the other students. They have no consistency in their academics or grades, and they have fallen behind, so they are not eligible for extracurricular activities or athletics. They become frustrated, so they return to the boarding school in January and return to us again in March or April. They have then fallen even further behind academically. This also happens when students move from one public school to another.

- Our education system is anachronistic--it is still based on the Gregorian calendar which was done away with years ago. The education system in this country gears our Indian students for failure.

- Education is so essential for our young people. I think they must do well, and anything we can do to improve their academic performance is critical. I've been in education for 21 years and retired this summer, so academic performance is something I'm personally very much interested in. Too many of our children are in public schools where the administrators and teachers do not pay sufficient attention to their needs. We have to make them aware of what the situation really is and how they can help and perhaps persuade them to do so. It is a rather long row, but I think we can hoe it. I think it can be done.

<u>Restructuring the System</u>

- I am an advocate for restructuring education. I feel that reforming a system that has never really worked for the majority of our children is of no value. I think we need to look at every single education issue.

For instance, I think we should restructure the school day. Cognitive research tells us that 90 minutes is a natural time frame for getting involved in, experiencing, and coming to a conclusion regarding a new concept that has just been introduced. So the 50-minute hour is not enough and is not congruent with what we know about how people learn. Furthermore, since families have a lot of problems with adequate child care, I believe the school day should coincide with the parental work day. We should be able to take our children to school when we go to work and pick them up on the way home.

- I have worked with the Title V program in an urban area for nearly 12 years. Our program serves three school districts, the largest of which has 42 schools. One issue we have is that Title V in urban areas often is the main agency that is available to meet family, community, educational, and cultural needs, but its programs are poorly funded.

Also our largest district found Indian students and other minorities to be disproportionately represented in Chapter 1 and special education programs. They are now taking a serious look at all aspects of their system to find out why this is so. They are considering factors such as teacher expectation, teaching strategies, curriculum, and disciplinary procedures.

I am hoping that within two years we will have a significant turnaround in these numbers, but I wanted you to know that at least one district is addressing the issues. This came about because minority parents banded together and insisted that something had to change. The superintendent responded by appointing a racial justice task force to examine all of the contributing factors and make recommendations. Also a study was conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. They found enough issues that the superintendent decided to appoint a Council on Educational Excellence and Equity. They will be looking at all of these issues over the next two years.

- About 34 percent of the Indian students who come to the University of California cannot read, write, or understand math and science concepts at the level we would like. But I am not sure we are being too easy on our students. I feel strongly that there are many problems with the public schools and this is why I favor restructuring.

Our students do learn differently. Their learning style, including the way they receive, process, and retain information, does differ, and until we have special state credentialing for teachers of Indian children and additional training in Indian education, we are going to miss the boat.

- I think there should be some types of guidelines to address the issue of students who move back and forth between schools within a semester. The Bureau should put together guidelines for accepting students. There should also be services for transferring students, so that when they do enter a new school the transition is smoother.

- When approaching school boards about hiring aides or offering special instruction, one of the biggest barriers we run up against is money. They don't have the money or can't allocate it this fiscal year. One of the beauties about being a federally funded agency is that there are many grants available to us as tribal members for continuing education and remedial education.

By having us identify the need within the district and then supply them with the grant, the district is able to put money back into its schools for serving the special needs of our students. Then as administrators, we in turn can hire the instructors and the teacher aides, and we can

put together a culturally sensitive program in addition to providing tutorial and remedial work. This kind of grant assistance is available through the tribal councils.

If your tribe is not organized in such a way that an office or individual is responsible for research and grant writing, then you need to approach the people who are involved in education and who are receiving federal and state grants. They will know where to look in the Federal Register and may have useful information available regarding application for one-year to three-year mini grants that will enable you to go to the school board with resources in hand. When you can do this, you can tell the board that this will serve their students, make them look good, and help Indian students succeed. The resources are out there; it just may take a lot of phone calls to Washington.

III. Student Assessment and Competency Testing

Defining the Problems

I work for the Indian Education Center for Excellence in New Mexico, and our Center recognizes the importance of having public school districts and tribal leaders work together. This was the reason why we established the Center. We are also concerned that our Indian children in public schools are often left out. We are especially concerned about the indicators of academic success because the methods used to identify success are sometimes invalid for our people. I think we need to bring our way of life and the academic life closer together to determine how they can complement and support one another.

Increasingly in the last two years, we have seen measures of academic performance serve as gatekeepers to future opportunities for our youth, rather than addressing the problems they face. As an example, the New Mexico Legislature passed a state competency law in 1986 that requires students to pass a competency test before they receive a high school diploma. If students do not pass that test, they receive a "certificate of attendance" rather than a diploma. Without that diploma, they cannot hold any state positions in New Mexico. We have also heard comments from the private sector, corporations, and foundations, that they do not recognize the certificate as being valid.

Currently the test is paper and pencil. It was not developed in New Mexico, although the State Department of Education was involved. They used the expertise of individuals who were associated with other national testing organizations. State law says that students who come from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds can develop their own alternative methods of assessment, but we haven't been given the time to do this yet, although the law has been in effect since this past spring.

The Center for Indian Schools was developing a Native American competency testing program, but the focus was to determine whether students are really ready to enter 10th grade, so we would have three years to work with those students who have deficiencies.

Tribal representatives, Indian educators, and members of the Center's board who are also school superintendents feel we have not been given enough time to address problems related to remediation for those students who do not pass the competency tests or even to analyze areas where our students may be deficient. We feel the State Department has a responsibility to do a test item analysis of the instrument. This past year, 50 percent of the Indian student population taking the tests as sophomores were unable to pass. Now we only have two years to work with them, and we don't really have a clear idea of the problem areas.

- Last time I checked, there were over 30 states with these minimum competency testing programs.

- Assessment is an issue that is really atrocious. I work at the Sherman Indian School in Riverside, CA. The BIA requires that we test the children with the California Achievement Test (CAT). The CAT is based on the California State framework, yet Sherman Indian School does not have the state-adopted textbooks. The reason for this is that no money goes to the state for BIA schools. BIA does not send Impact Aid money to the State Department of Education as it does for the El Toro Marine Base. The Marine Base Impact Aid money goes to the state and comes back in curriculum and textbook purchases. To make the insult even greater, there is no textbook budget in the BIA funding. So we cannot get on the textbook list and we aren't in the state textbook cycle. As a result, for instance, our health education textbooks are 15 years old. Most of the recent diseases are not even addressed in the curriculum.

- As of Fall 1990, Montana is using the ACT scores now as one of the requirements for admission to college. One of the requirements is composite score of 20 on the ACT. If you look at the statistics, you find that minorities and poor students score a lot lower than white students. For example, Indians score an average of about 14 composite on the ACT compared to the national average of 18 to 19. In Montana, the state average is 20.

  I think we need to do some research on this with Educational Testing Services and the College Board to determine whether or not these tests are culturally unbiased and fair to American Indians. We also need to take a position on use of test scores as they relate to college admission.

Promising Programs and Strategies

- I am from the New Mexico Department of Education and I coordinate the statewide testing program. For the last couple of years, I have been working specifically in the area of testing as it relates to Indian students because it has been a major issue in our state.

  I remember reading articles in the past that always started out with headlines like, "31 percent of Indian students score lower on tests." This kind of headline creates a very negative image, especially for the students. I know this because I worked as a counselor of Indian students for nine years.

  So the Department is trying to do something different. For example, test scores are usually reported in the aggregate across all Native American tribes in the state. When we look at them individually, we find that test results vary widely from tribe to tribe and from school to school. So in order to more clearly identify areas of strength and weakness, we are now looking at scores on a disaggregated basis. We are finding that there are some districts in New Mexico where Indian students are scoring very high and we find certain programs where we are really seeing improvement in test scores. So we know that we have some programs that are working. This helps us get away from the totally negative picture that results from lumping everything together.

  Another strategy we have used is to examine the concept of testing itself. I personally have been interviewing Indian students to get more qualitative data and ideas on the issue of testing in Indian culture.

All state governments are going through this accountability reform movement and are having to do more testing. This year New Mexico is ranking schools by test scores, which we feel is stepping 20 years backward. As a result, Indian schools are coming out at the bottom of those rankings. Although much work has been done to improve tests, and we have looked at cultural bias in testing, this really hasn't changed anything. I believe that the whole concept of testing is culturally biased, and so in New Mexico we are looking for other assessment strategies.

- North Carolina also has a state competency test which is given to everyone in the 10th grade and then again in the 11th and twice in the 12th grades. So students have four opportunities to pass and must only retake portions they failed to pass. Our Indian students have done well considering some of the test biases in terms of thought processes. We do not, however, have language problems.

- In looking at assessment, we have taken the standard deviation between the CAT subscores or the GPA. The greater the distance between the scores, the greater the academic potential we feel students have. For instance, if a student has an A, two D's and an F, this tells us that the student has high probability for GATE programs because the A shows what they can do given the right learning styles and the right approach. On the other hand, students who are making C's across the board are probably working up to their potential. We have found similar potential with students whose CAT scores vary widely. For instance, they may score high on math concepts and low on math vocabulary. I am currently doing research with a control group at Sherman Indian High School and will be writing a paper on this issue which I hope to have published.

  So many of our students learn by hands-on experience. They are what we call tactile or kinesthetic learners. They can watch a lab experiment, or see how a problem is done, and they will understand how it works, but they can't explain it. So if you take the vocabulary scores out of the composite CAT score, I find Indians students' scores are considerably higher. This suggests that there is still a problem with language barriers.

IV. Teacher Competency and Accountability

- Increased reliance on student competency testing leaves the door wide open to the issue of competency testing for their teachers. Since all schools now have computerized their testing, grade, and attendance records, databases exist that can break out the records for individual teachers. It is significant to find out what percent of those students not meeting minimum competencies are coming from what groups of teachers and from what school districts and areas. If our students are paying a price for someone's ineptitude, it is not unreasonable for us to band together and demand to see the numbers of students who are being penalized because of teaching errors and abominations that are committed in our classrooms. This information should be in the public domain; it would provide us with a tool to readdress the issue of students' competency and focus attention on teacher competency and relevance to our students.

- I am a superintendent of schools from Montana. Everybody stresses that we have to have Native American teachers; yet our Indian teachers are having a hard time passing the National Teachers Exam.

V. Stereotyping, Tracking, and Low Expectations

Defining the Problems

- Stereotyping on the part of our educators who work with Native American students is a major problem and a self-fulfilling prophecy. When students are told that they are not going to succeed, they live up to these expectations. There is also a lot of prejudice and discrimination in the system. We have teachers who have never really been exposed to Indian culture except when they teach the students. They don't really understand the people they are working with..

  Teacher expectations are really important. I was a high school principal in a school where we had one teacher who was very demanding of his students. They were scared of him, but they performed and they always did excellently on the achievement tests. However, the same students who did really well in this teacher's class did very poorly in other classes where the teachers had lower expectations.

- I work in the Juneau School District in Alaska. One of the things that concerns me is that our district has a lot of programs like special education, resource room, emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disturbed programs, and it seems like the Native kids are overrepresented in these programs which sends out a negative message about our children's abilities. Kids don't want to be identified as Native because they see so many other Native kids going to these programs. At the other end of the spectrum, we are underrepresented in the gifted and talented program. We are having a dialogue with district administrators to try to change the ways they identify and select students for these programs. At present they use the Iowa Basic Skills, an I.Q. test, and teacher recommendations. But often the decisions are made primarily on the basis of the test scores. These tests are biased against Native children.

- Eighty-five percent of Native American children attend public schools, which shows the importance of reaching public school teachers and administrators and convincing them of the need to help serve these students. Research shows (and I certainly agree) that if a teacher doesn't believe a student is very capable of learning, the result will reflect that. But if you have a positive attitude, if you believe in your heart that this child has a lot of potential, the child will rise to that.

- I was told recently that many of our gifted and talented children are not identified because they are underachievers due to having a negative attitude about why they should achieve.

- I am concerned about the problem of those Indian students who "fall through the cracks" in the public school systems. My uncle is on the school board in our district, and we seem to have a lot of things going for our tribe, but Indian kids are still falling through the cracks.

  We have a GATE program which serves our gifted Indian students. But my son, who is a really strange kid, is an example of the problem I am talking about. When he was growing up, we called him "witch" because he sees ghosts and talks about really strange things. He is getting older now and he is learning not to talk so much. He scored in the 90th percentile in math and the 99th in verbal ability, but he was never recognized as a GATE student. In the seventh grade he took the SAT exam and scored 950, but because he is culturally strange, people think he is weird or they ignore him. He has Indian values and this sometimes affects the way he reacts to situations. In fact, if you talk to him, he won't respond and he is lacking some skills. In the ninth grade he couldn't use the public telephone. He didn't know how to

use it and put a bunch of money in and lost it. So he is kind of a crazy kid, but it seems to me that the test scores are undeniable evidence of his giftedness. A long time ago, he would have been recognized as a witch, but now these things are held against him. It seems a tragedy that he was never identified for these special programs.

Positive Expectations and Recognizing Success

- I'm sure you are aware of a survey that was done a few years ago, where grades were switched. Students were given tests to identify the high and low achievers. Then the teachers were given students who were high achievers and told that they were low achievers. Other teachers were given the low achievers and told that they were really good students and ready to excel. All through the semester the students' grades reflected the teachers' expectations which were the opposite of what the students were theoretically capable of achieving. We need to emphasize the importance of a positive approach. If we expect our students to do well, they can and will, but we need to encourage them and build in that desire and incentive.

- If we teach our children that they can succeed, or if we teach our children to give up, either way we are going to be right.

- All I hear from my white friends are negative things about Indians and their education. But it is important to acknowledge that some of our Indian students are doing much better than they have done in the past. Just this last school year, of all ten students in our county who qualified for the Moorehouse Scholarship there were only two Indians, and they received the only two awards. I think is it helpful to share these successful experiences to help our brothers in other parts of the country become more competitive in the "white man's world" where we are judged. Indian kids need to see that some of our people are doing well.

- Indian students who are successful could at least be recognized by their local high school newspapers. Perhaps a column could be devoted to the Native American students who have accomplished outstanding achievements. They always recognize the athletes, so recognizing academic achievement is needed and deserved and is something that could be undertaken on a local level.

- I am from Sells, AZ, and I am representing the Indian Oasis School District and their Education Committee. When we tested our kids, the academic achievement levels went down, especially for those kids at the top. The administrator said not to worry because the kids at the bottom did very well. I think this is because there are a lot of programs for kids at the bottom and nothing for those at the top. So they are telling us not to worry and to forget about the kids who are the cream of the crop. We are pushing for a gifted program, so now they are starting to do something about this to serve the top 10 percent of our students.

VI. The Importance of Integrating Native Culture into Curriculum

Defining the Problems

- The program I am running catches students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to succeed in school. So ours is an afterschool dropout program that serves students ages 18 to 35 who have been out of school for more than one year. In dealing with their lack of success in school, we find that it is closely related to self-esteem problems.

- One of the basics that we need to introduce into our curriculum is the culture and the value of the language to the Indian child.

- I have noticed in my own family and in the group of urban Indians I'm involved with that we don't know very much about our tribal culture. We know sometimes the tribal name and sometimes even the band and where we came from, but living in the San Francisco Bay area, we don't really know very much about our tribes.

- I come from a public school district where we have a Native American program in the district, but it doesn't seem to be meeting the students' needs. I have suggested to teachers that they encourage the district to start including units on Native history and culture in the curriculum. I don't know what the first steps would be for someone like myself, as an individual, to take to proceed.

- I believe we need to have a more positive attitude about ourselves beginning with the history books and the ways Indians have been portrayed historically. We need a more positive reflection of our contributions. We have a significant Native population in the Juneau community. As many as 20 to 25 percent of the students are Native American. So we are working with the district to try to bring in programs that better reflect the Native community. Also teachers are required to have multicultural training.

- At one point, if you worked as a teacher on or near a reservation in Montana, you were required to take six credits in Native American studies. Resistance to this requirement was so strong that it almost started a teacher riot.

Promising Programs and Strategies

- In order to get Native instruction into the classroom, concerned parents would be advised to approach the school board and the person on the school district staff who is responsible for making recommendations to the school board on curriculum adoption.

- In trying to integrate Native curriculum into the classroom, I have run into a lot of brick walls in my 12 years of teaching experience. One thing I have found is that you need to get the backing of the local community when you are going to go to the school district or school board. One place I worked where we had success with this was in Sitka, Alaska. The whole school district had only one Native American teacher and they were lacking Native American curriculum as well as approaches to building self-esteem. But we got a core group of people together who worked to address both the curriculum issue and the affirmative action problem to increase hiring of Native teachers. The brick wall we ran into was the school board. We had the backing of the Native organizations, and eventually the teacher organizations followed. First the local teachers union backed us, and then we got the Alaska Teachers union to back us. So it is a real local community involvement process to get Native curriculum into the schools.

- I work for the Fremont Unified School District. I am a credentialed teacher, but I work as an aide for the Native American Studies Program (Title V and Title VII) in the San Francisco Bay area. As an aide, my jobs are to tutor our students and to teach culture classes in grades K through 6. I have also been able to attend a lot of the district's workshops that are held to reinforce new programs being established. As a result, I have become very much aware of what is being taught in the K through 6 classroom. I am working to establish a curriculum in my culture classes that can strengthen what teachers use in their classrooms.

We will be studying the Northwest coastal cultures this year. Students will be keeping journals in class. In addition to learning about the tribes and talking about various aspects of their culture, we will be doing carvings. We will also learn about the topography and geography of the area and about the various states and countries that have been involved with those tribes. The program will also include sentence and paragraph writing. So I am hoping to reinforce the regular teacher's instruction by integrating it into my program. Also, as a tutor, I know where my students' basic skill weaknesses are and can help them work on those areas through the culture curriculum. The math and language arts activities we do will be strictly for fun and will not be graded, but I am looking forward to seeing their journals and encouraging them to improve their math and writing skills.

- I worry about the long-range. I believe in the traditional family strength in Indian country. I believe in the culture and the language. I think it is a key to overcoming our drug and alcohol problems in Montana and in Indian country. We must get back to that strong traditional family and listen to our Elders. We started a grandfathers' and grandmothers' program in my school district where the Elders come into the classroom. For some reason the children in that room are really learning when the grandparents are there.

- Our JOM tutor aide is now home-based and works with children after school. But the school district sometimes feels that because they have the Title V program in the schools, they are doing something to help Indian children, when actually it is a band-aid approach. This year when the school people said that they really needed the tutor, I went to the superintendent and suggested he match the funds if he wanted the service. I think as Indian people, we have to get vocal.

- We are trying to pull a cultural heritage project together which involves the Elders. We find that a large number of people interested in our program really do not know where their roots and traditions lie. So to address this, we have begun to recruit Elders. We are using a curriculum from northern Michigan called the Red Cliff Wellness Program, which focuses on Native values and customs. We are using it as a teaching tool in the high schools and in the elementary schools, and we are trying to get a computer company to put it together in the form of a software program.

VII. Promising Alternative Instructional Strategies

A Right-Brain & Left-Brain Approach

- As principal of the Native American Magnet School in Buffalo, NY, I want to tell you that our school is part of the regular public schools and for the past two years, with a prevailing number of minority students being Native, we have experienced a measure of success in academics. I would like to share with you how that came about:

A few years ago at the NIEA Conference I heard a presentation about "hemispheric specialization" and how that matched Native learning styles. I then did some research within my own school and found similar results. I found that around 70 percent of the Native children were right-brain dominant, while the traditional American school is very left-brain oriented. Thus it is no wonder that Native children fall behind other students (especially on testing) from the very beginning. When I made that statement to the school board in an attempt to get money from them, an African-American board member asked if I knew anything about hemispheric specialization in regard to black children. I said I did not, but would be happy to research that if they would give me money to do so. They agreed, and we

developed a learning style preference test that was administered to Native Americans, black, Hispanic, and Caucasian children. Again, we found that 69 percent of the Native American children tested in Buffalo were right-brain dominant. We also found that 58 percent of the African-American children tested were right-brain dominant. What really topped it off was that 54 percent of the Caucasian students were also right-brain dominant. This was different from previous research findings I had studied. We also tested a large sample of Hispanic students because we have two large bilingual schools in Buffalo and found that 39 percent of the Hispanic children tested were right-brain dominant.

If you look at those percentages and then realize that over 90 percent of the schools in this country are very linear, sequential, left-brain oriented, and focused predominantly on development of language and literacy, it is clear that many students aren't being appropriately served. In responding to our findings, we did not choose to advocate one approach over another. Instead, we connected hemispheric specialization to four learning styles: two that were linked to the gifts of the right brain, and two that were linked to the gifts of the left brain. We then developed a program to assist our teachers in teaching to the whole brain. It has required a little bit of teacher in-service to become successful at a more balanced approach, but we have been doing this.

We found that for right-brain children in a left-brain setting, literacy was a primary problem. So we have adopted a "whole language" approach. As defined by Australians and New Zealanders, this means that there is a mode of bringing about emergent literacy through a holistic view, teaching from the whole to the part. There is no question that this helps right-brain children.

I went to a BIA boarding school when I was in high school, and I was one of the very few kids who took physics as a senior. We had a teacher who taught physics through a trial-and-error method. He realized that if he would give his students a holistic view of what was in the chapter, they would do better. So he would first give us an overview, and then teach the parts. So he was doing the same thing because he had discovered through trial and error, that it worked better.

So, if you are looking for ways to integrate Native studies into the regular curriculum, you have to show success not only for Native children, but also for the benefits that this will provide to non-Native children. We have a model in the Native American Magnet School in Buffalo, and we are helping our students realize academic success. In conjunction with the ACES Conference scheduled for November in Buffalo, we will be publishing an article about this data in their magazine, Changing Winds.

Moving Beyond Textbooks

I teach high school science at the Window Rock High School in Arizona, and I have worked for a number of years as a biologist. I was fascinated by the discussion on right-brain and left-brain dominance, because I think the reason scores are so high in the biology area is that today's children are all T.V. watchers and Walkman listeners. They don't read. There really needs to be an emphasis on reading and teacher lectures and bringing in interesting materials besides a text. That is what I do in my classes and it is pretty successful. We discuss current issues and I team up the successful students with the low readers. I have my students keep journals. I do a lot of imaginative things to integrate the culture into my classes, and I have been gathering materials over the past ten years. As I was telling a textbook vendor here at the conference, culture is being made now, so why not have the kids start writing a lot of their own things down and then using them as materials. Another approach I have used is to

have the kids do lab experiments and then we videotape them to show to other classes. They find a lot of humor in this, but they also learn.

Integrated Curriculum and Cooperative Learning

For the past four years I have been teaching reading and writing at the Ogalala College on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The primary reason that I became part of the staff there was that four years ago they were still having a dropout problem in the college. Thirty-five percent of the incoming freshmen were dropping out in the first semester and we were really concerned.

We began to do some assessment testing in math, reading, and writing, and we found that 35 percent of the freshmen students were reading and writing below eighth grade level. These were students who had a high school diploma or GED certificate. Fifteen percent of entering freshmen were at eighth grade level, and the remaining 50 percent were reading at tenth grade or above.

In the past four years we have been able reduce our first semester freshman dropout rate to 10 percent through a cooperative program among the math, writing, and reading programs.

With this knowledge in hand, last year I became principal at Crazy Horse High School in Wanblee, South Dakota. My approach has been to integrate the curriculum and reduce the fragmentation, so that English and social studies classes are integrated and across grade levels in grades 9 through 12. We also use a cooperative learning model with outcome-based direction; and students are in the class for two-hour blocks of time.

The teachers are teamed so that each team includes two English teachers, two social studies teachers, one Chapter 1 teacher, one psychology and careers teacher, and one cultural language specialist. We use the whole language approach and have our students reading and writing much more than if they were in fragmented classrooms studying under one teacher.

Applying Special Education Strategies

We have found that special education techniques (not those for behavior disorders or learning disabilities), such as establishing performance goals and objectives, sequentially analyzing materials, and setting up principles and expectations that allow the kids to get down to work, actually work splendidly with our students. We also have found that with a one-to-one student/teacher ratio and use of computerized instructional support, the student's average academic growth is almost 1.5 grade average for three months of instruction. By making sure that the curriculum addresses the academic and social needs of the students and showing them their progress with the curriculum, the students' self-esteem just explodes. They are given levels of success that are far above what they have encountered in the regular educational setting. We also find that selecting teachers of Native American heritage, with special education backgrounds, is an ideal combination to help our students succeed.

As a special educator, I just happened upon this discovery because we lacked curriculum in our dropout program to help students make it through high school and through the transition out into prevocational or postsecondary education. We had to condense material they were supposed to cover, sequence it, and test them frequently so they could progress to certain proficiency levels. We know that use of computers and computer management skills is extremely important for future success in most industries and jobs, so our program is computer-based. Student progress has been outstanding--the vast majority of our kids just rip

through the material. This indicates that they were not failing school per se, they were failing to produce the responses that were required of them by regular teachers.

Initially students are somewhat intimidated by the computers, but we use the PALS program, which is extremely basic yet moves students rapidly through the steps beginning with "What is a keyboard?" "What is a computer?" Within weeks, they are already starting up their own programs, running them, and scoring themselves.

VIII. Other Promising Strategies

Training for Instructional Aides

- In our district, we have an Indian education program which funds two teacher aides. They are not certified teachers, they have very little training in this area, and have never been given any in-service training. They are itinerant, which is to say that they serve a caseload of 96 students scattered among 13 schools. I just don't think that this is an efficient or effective means of addressing the special needs of Native American students.

- I am very aggressive. I first went to my director and got her permission to approach the district. Then, I called up the district head of elementary education and said, "I am an aide and a tutor in the Native American Studies Program, and I would like to attend any of the teacher training workshops that you have." They said I could and put me on a mailing list for workshops. So all through the year I attended workshops at the expense of my program. I would just go in quietly and sit at the back of the room and soak up everything I could get. This has been really helpful to me and has improved my tutoring abilities. So I recommend an aggressive strategy. It is especially helpful to attend the new teacher training workshops. They are very, very basic and really give new teachers techniques they can use for teaching math, reading, and writing. If you can get your aides to do this, it will really strengthen the program.

Extra-curricular Activities as a Motivator

In Montana, basketball is king in athletics. To improve our academic standings, we have incorporated a simple eligibility plan that if you don't pass a class, you don't participate. All of a sudden parents are coming up to me and saying, "Geez, my kid is opening books." They want to participate, and we have about 80 to 90 percent involved in some kind of activity. They want to play ball, they want to play in the band, they want to go to the speech contest, so they are opening their books.

An Employer's Approach

- Sometimes I worry that we take away from our Indian students by trying to give them too much. We want them to keep their culture and their ways, but there are times when they have to learn to cross over the fine line. I have had a couple of employees who went back to school because I put strict demands on them. I told them they wouldn't get paid if they didn't finish the job. You know they have learned how to keep time schedules and follow through on things.

It is razor's edge that our young people must walk, with one foot in one world and one foot in the other. But if they are going to succeed in the non-Indian world, they do need to learn to do these things.

IX. The Importance of Parental Involvement

- There is lack of parent involvement. Almost all of our parents want their children to get an education, but they do not know what education is. They do not have Readers Digest, National Geographic, or even a dictionary in their house.

- The key thing is parental involvement. We have a lot of kids from dysfunctional families. In looking for ways to pull them into school, we decided that if a kid is ineligible for activities, we have a 90- minute study hall after school. Parents have to come in with their kids and sit with them through these study sessions. It is the little goofy things like that, which have helped us.

- I teach adult education at the Denver Indian School. We are all educators speaking here today, and we are all into pushing our children into education. I am educating people whose academic grade levels are zero through three or eight. One of the reasons they want to learn is so they can teach and work with their children. They want to be able to read to their children. I think this is so important that I am standing up here shaking while I talk about it, but we have to educate parents, too.

X. College Preparation versus Vocational Education

A Question of Emphasis

- We seem to put an emphasis on students who go to college. I wonder whether we put more emphasis on college entrance than we ought to and whether we might be ignoring some students who simply are not college material--never were and never would be--but they can perform academically very well in other areas. I taught in a public school where we had an outstanding vocational education department, and it served students who were super achievers, but not college material. They didn't want to go to college or simply didn't have the background. Is there a feeling that too much emphasis is being placed on qualifying students for college?

A Parent's Perspective

- Speaking as a parent, we can't afford to teach our kids everything, whether they go to vocational school, college, or any kind of postsecondary training. We also can't afford to say, "Well, put that kid on vocational," because some of them are not going to speak up.

My child went to a school that didn't even have any advanced placement classes and she did all right. In fact, she was valedictorian of her class, but there were only 50 kids. But she can do it out there because we live on the reservation. I was a pushy mom in terms of parent involvement, and I wouldn't allow anyone to tell her she couldn't do something. If you want to do it, you go for it, and if anybody tells you you can't, well just try it anyway, and I will stand behind you. So now she is a sophomore at Stanford and she is getting straight A's. So we parents are the key. We're the first teachers, and we have to tell our children that they will come into contact with other people who aren't as supportive. We have to give our children their identity. I told her, "Never forget who you are." That confidence of knowing who you are means you know what you can do, and it goes back to the culture.

All students need the basics regardless of whether they want to go into vocational training or college or whatever. They all need to know math and science, even if they are going into vocational training. My daughter needed to have calculus, and I had to send her somewhere to take it because by the time you get to Stanford you are supposed to know the basics.

Tribal Perspectives

- I'm from the Tohono O'Odham Nation in southern Arizona and I am here representing both the reservation and the Sherman Indian High School where I serve on the school board. I support the push for college preparatory emphasis if it is necessary. I say this because in Sherman School's situation, we have to promote a college focus for the school's survival. We all know that Indian boarding schools are being pushed aside. Right now we have an enrollment of close to 500 students from 77 different tribes. A lot of students don't come prepared, but they do have an idea of what they want in life, and that is very important.

- Every time we go into a high school or college setting and try to label kids as either vocational or academic, we have a major problem. There is always a question or debate about academics versus practical education. In my life in the Indian world, education was a lifelong process. It was not something that you received a diploma for and then got a job. Life was meant to be a process of learning. Until we get that kind of a picture, we will not begin to address the real needs of American Indian students.

Postsecondary Perspectives

- From the grey roots on my head, you know that I have been teaching for a long, long time, so I speak out of experience. Many times our Indian students are labeled and programmed to fail. But as someone said in the main session, "success defines success." Once you get students into school and they have some academic success, it really changes their values and their self-esteem. I had a student who entered the carpentry program. He also took some other courses like vocational accounting in order to get his AVT. He did really well in accounting, and so he changed his major to business and has done very well in this. This has happened to many students. Yes, there are many who need vocational education, but from my experience, those young people will find out themselves whether they should go to vocational school or college.

As Indian people, we find that many of our young people who have the potential are not directed into the college curriculum simply because they are Indian. Then if and when they do get to college, they are behind and have to take extra courses to get the college preparation basics that they missed in high school. I have had students tell me that counselors told them, "You will never make it in college," and some of them now have masters degrees.

- I am a recruiter for California State University at Chico and have been doing this for a number of years now. The first factor is that most Indian students believe they are going into vocational education. They don't believe they are going to go any higher in education than they are. I think the emphasis we need to make as parents and as educators is to support our children to consider all options and opportunities. We also need to find out about the requirements and how to get into higher education.

We receive information from counselors and from community colleges, but we don't know about the exceptions. We don't know about the minority students who are getting into higher education under those exceptions. When we go out to recruit Indian students and try to convince them that they do have the qualities to go on and obtain a college degree, we spend

most of our time talking with them about their self-esteem--just to get them to fill out the application. If they can read and write, there are opportunities and there are support services at the college level that most parents and students don't even know about. So recruiting Indian students is a very, very difficult job because you have to convince the student to apply, you have to convince the parents that they need to support their student, and then you have to sort out how to apply for financial aid so the students will get the services and funds they need.

In fact, only a very, very small group of Indian students go on to college. I don't believe that our Title V programs are focusing on this. Most Title V programs I know of are trying to keep kids in school. College-bound students are basically underserved because they are doing okay and most teachers don't let them out to attend special programs.

Several years ago, we were trying to recruit minority students into law school. We knew that if you wait until the student is ready to graduate from undergraduate school, you have waited too long to recruit them for law school, because many times they have not performed well enough academically to get in to law or any of the other professional schools. So I developed a program that was aimed at high school students. We published a book entitled, "So You Want to Be a Lawyer," and we put that in the hands of every high school counselor in the state of Texas, so they could talk intelligently about what it took to go to law school. You can't wait until you are a senior at the university to discover that you have got to have certain academic requirements to get into law school; you have to know this before you start college.

Now I think college recruiters should start at the elementary school to inspire a child to have goals to go to college or to be a teacher. One of the problems I have found in the teaching profession is that it does not tend to attract the top of the class. You want top flight students as teachers; you don't want the bottom of the class to come in and teach your students because the chances are they may not know as much as the students do.

I work at the University of California, Santa Barbara campus, and have also worked at the community college level in California. I believe we must prepare students for college level work regardless of their future plans, because--at least in California--both college and vocational postsecondary training require this preparation.

College admission in California is based on the entering student having a grade point average of 3.0 or better. We know that our Indian students aren't prepared to earn B's in every subject they take. If they can perform at a C average level, then they are prepared for either community college or vocational programs at the community college level. In California we are not as fortunate as some other states that have private postsecondary vo-tech schools where the BIA pays a subsistence stipend for students to attend. Students in our state must compete for limited slots at the community college level for vocational training programs. If you are interested in becoming an LPN or a beautician, you must be prepared in the sciences and mathematics to compete with other applicants for those enrollment slots. If you are planning to be a welder, a carpenter, or an auto mechanic, you must also compete and need strong preparation in math.